

Highlights *of* Italian-American **History** *in* Los Angeles

Part 1: The Early Pioneers

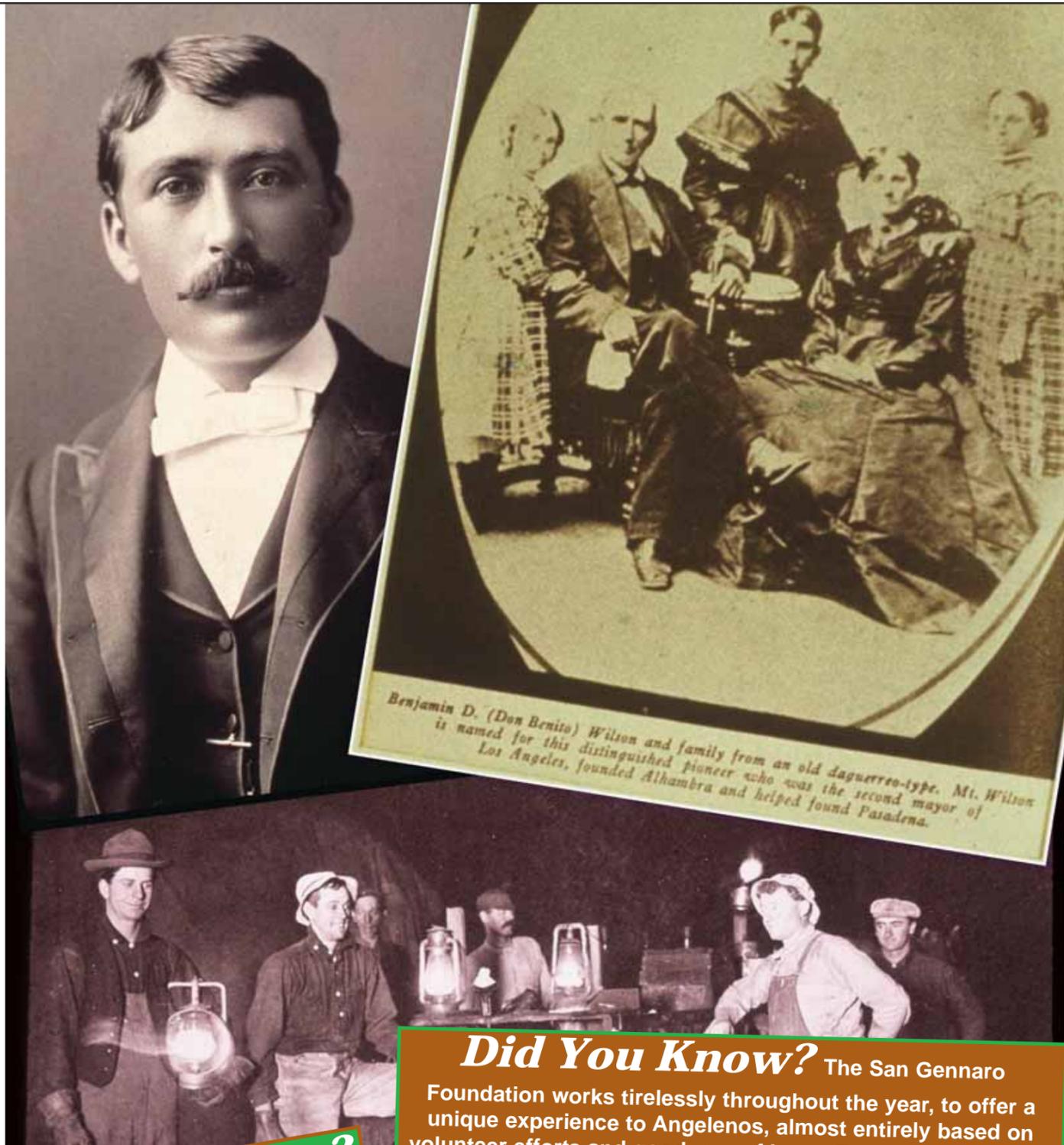
1820s-1900

Highlights of The Early Pioneers (1820's-1900)

- Limited 19th century immigration from the northern regions of Italy.
- Italian presence at El Pueblo (downtown Olvera Street area) began in 1823 when Sardinian native, Giovanni Leandri, opened a store and built an adobe home where the Plaza fire station now stands; Leandri served as a municipal official and was grantee of the 48,806 acre Rancho Los Coyotes, today's Buena Park.
- Leandri, along with others including Piedmontese Antonio Pelanconi, Genoese Antonio Repetto whose rancho is today's Montebello and Secondo Guasti who established what he described as "the world' largest winery" in distant Rancho Cucamonga, played a vital role in the development of the wine making and agricultural economies of early Los Angeles.
- Italian settlers who reached California were often transmigrants who had become familiar with American customs and language as they crossed the continent.
- In southern California the familiar Mediterranean environment, the availability of land and cultural similarities with Hispanic population encouraged a welcoming atmosphere and lack of discrimination toward Italians, which led to easier assimilation compared to other areas of the US.
- In the late 1800s two Italian American service groups were founded, merging in 1916 to form La Società Garibaldina Di Mutua Beneficenza which exists to this day and continues to serve the social and philanthropic needs of the community, while also providing a model for future such organizations.

For more historical background see: Gloria R. Lothrop, "Italians of Los Angeles: An Historical Overview," SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY (Fall 2003). Available in reprint from the Historic Italian Hall Foundation.

For additional information go to the Cultural Outreach Genealogy Booth or visit www.FeastOfLA.org



Benjamin D. (Don Benito) Wilson and family from an old daguerro-type. Mr. Wilson is named for this distinguished pioneer who was the second mayor of Los Angeles, founded Alhambra and helped found Pasadena.

Did You Know? The San Gennaro

Foundation works tirelessly throughout the year, to offer a unique experience to Angelenos, almost entirely based on volunteer efforts and goodness of heart. This event offers the community free, top of the line entertainment, a safe, enjoyable and familiar destination for all, and a unique opportunity for Cultural Exchange. If you are reading this, you are an ESTEEMED GUEST OF THIS EVENT!

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 • Mariann Gatto, Curator, El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historic Monument and Historic Italian Hall Museum
 • Gloria Ricci Lothrop, Ph.D., W. P. Whitsett Professor Emerita, CSU Northridge.
 • Jean Bruce Poole and Tevvy Ball, El Pueblo: The Historic Heart of Los Angeles, Oxford University Press USA, 2002. All Rights Reserved.

Did You Know?

In 2006 The San Gennaro Foundation, in collaboration with Pontiac, awarded more than \$35,000 in scholarships to underprivileged children.